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REVIEWS

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Progressive teachers of English are attending more and more to increasing the powers of their students in ordinary spoken intercourse. This is not public speaking in the old sense. They are interested less in the infinitesimal intricacies of a perfect vocal technique or the elaborate involutions of the mastery of such complicated forms of address as argument and dramatics than in simple conversation and the development of everyday efficiency in informal, unpretentious social intercommunication.

There are few textbooks to help such teachers. The old books are formal, sometimes ludicrously technical, often decidedly wordy, and only in slight degree applicable to ordinary life. Nor is there a tendency among specialists in the speech arts to provide volumes suitable for the use of teachers of English who do not have, and do not particularly require, the professional equipment to conduct isolated, highly technical speech work.

Dr. Clarence Stratton, director of English in the Cleveland high schools, has attempted to write such a book.¹ Within a very compact little volume he has condensed a vast amount of interesting material about how to express one's self orally on public occasions.

In some respects the book is thoroughly conventional, looking—or seeming to look—backward, rather than forward. It is far from radical. It holds, for one thing, mainly to time-honored, conventional chapter and topic headings. A teacher not alert to new ideas might conceivably find in it nothing which seemed in the least different from his old, established friends—volumes on argumentation, with agglutinative chapters on extempore speaking and the drama.

Perhaps it is well, at least commercially speaking, that a textbook should not strike out too valiantly into new and unblazed paths. But Mr. Stratton is attempting a new, not merely a conventional, sort of undertaking—a handbook to accompany, stimulate, and guide the speech work in a class which is in spirit and aim more social than technical, more interested in the subject-matter of topics, the occasion, and

¹ *Public Speaking*. By CLARENCE STRATTON. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1920. Pp. 342.

the desired effect on a real audience than in the rhetorical or exact linguistic form in which the speech may be clothed. His conception is thoroughly dynamic.

The book is very readable and very comprehensive. It ranges, indeed, to amazing extremes of information—from the vocal cords (well described for pupils, by the way) to the Dewey decimal system of library classification. In its examples and its applications it is modern. There is of course no such heresy as to leave out the venerable Burke altogether; but one feels that the author lives, and expects students to live, mainly well toward the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Any live teacher ought to be able to make such a text *go* well. It will not do the work of the instructor or of the class. Very effectively it will enrich an active program of initiatory and habit-forming oral effort; it will not substitute for such effort. The teacher who seeks a textbook for a basis for question-and-answer instruction had better let this (and all oral English!) alone.

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A CONCRETE ANSWER

The discussion of the teaching of English has recently been so shot through with the terms motivation, project, habituation, socialized recitation, and supervised study that many a puzzled teacher has almost given up in despair. Undoubtedly, since the experts say so, she ought to use all these devices. But unfortunately the experts usually stop without telling her specifically how to do any one of them. Miss McGregor has now come to her aid with a delightfully concrete answer to most of these problems.¹ While her book is called *Supervised Study*, it really covers the whole field of English teaching in the junior high school, and the principles will be easily applied to the senior high school as well.

The whole work of the English teacher is divided into oral English, literature, written composition, and grammar, and chapters on special kinds of skill in English and the use of projects are added as different cross-sections of the task. Under each of these heads there are a very brief general discussion of the total problem and a number of illustrative lessons. These plans are all made for a sixty-minute period, of

¹ *Supervised Study in English for Junior High School Grades.* By LAURA A. MCGREGOR. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1921. Pp. 220.